

TUBERCULOSIS—WARNING.

While on the subject of tuberculosis, it may not be amiss to print right here the following warning; apparently it is getting to be quite the habit to attempt to "work" people in the name of anti-tuberculosis enterprises:

The following warning is sent out by the California Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis:

A magazine called "Our Tuberculous Children" is being circulated in certain parts of the State, with the subscription price of ten cents a copy, for the purpose of establishing a sanatorium in New Mexico for tuberculous children. This society, while organized in Chicago, is not endorsed by

1. The Chicago Association of Commerce, Charities Endorsement Committee.

2. Not affiliated nor endorsed by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis.

3. It is not affiliated with the Illinois State Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, nor the Chicago Tuberculosis Institute.

4. It was refused affiliation by the Mississippi Valley Conference on Tuberculosis.

5. Its promoters have never been identified with any organized tuberculosis movement.

6. There is no demand for such an organization, as the work they are undertaking is much better done by state and local tuberculosis associations.

7. Their method of raising money is objectionable, because only about 40 per cent. of the receipts are actually available for the work.

"PROGRESS OR RETROGRESSION?"

In the JOURNAL for August, at page 294, appeared an editorial note with the above caption. It referred to the recent reversal of form in Oakland and Sacramento, where through changing local and "practical" politics, health officers of known ability, "full time men," had been replaced by others. The little note seems to have attracted a good deal of attention, for a considerable number of letters have been received, all but two of them commending highly what was said at that time. The two adverse letters are printed herewith, both of them absolutely as written and without any *correction* or change whatsoever.

Dr. G. C. Simmons, of Sacramento, the gentleman who has been elected to the office of Commissioner of Public Health and Safety, is, admittedly, a man of education and training. This neither improves nor condones the situation. Incidentally it would seem that his duties as executive and responsible head of the Police Department, the Fire

Department and the Health Department, as well as those of President of the Commission, and therefore Mayor of the City, would leave him very little time to devote to the position of Health Officer.

The gentlemen who write these letters cannot differentiate a matter of fundamental principle in municipal government from personalities or petty economies. They might well recall the words of one who spoke with authority: "Is not the laborer worthy of his hire?" Is Sacramento so poor that it must be the recipient of charity? Is it right for a physician who happens to be in independent circumstances when assuming public office, to gratuitously fill the place of a necessary public officer and thus keep one who must work for a living from a legitimate position? Why has it happened that various universities have established courses in public health and give degrees to those who qualify in these courses, unless it be that those who really think know that a trained "full time" man is the most reliable and economical health officer for a community? And what encouragement is it, supposing that we need such health officers, for anyone to do all this work and really learn the miniature of health matters, if some philanthropically disposed physician, who has enough to live on, comes along and says "I will do all this work for nothing"? "Penny wise and pound foolish" is quite old. The mixing of business sense with a scientific handling of public health matters is quite new. Sacramento seems to have made a fleeting attempt to grasp the latter, but soon slipped back to the former. And no matter how well educated he may be, nor how much of a gentleman and a scholar he may be, the philanthropic physician is not going to do as good work as the trained health officer who has gone into this sphere of activity for his life work. This is said impersonally and without prejudice. The cost of typhoid to Sacramento was approximately the interest on \$3,000,000; the introduction of a chlorinating plant by the paid health officer reduced this approximately 73%. According to the letters below, Sacramento, by dismissing the paid health officer, saved \$275 a month or \$3,300 a year; the population is approximately 65,000; the cost per person of maintaining a paid health officer was 0.197 cents per year; the health officer saved the city approximately \$130,000. How about business and science? The whole system of electing a health officer, or having a practicing physician or a "part time" physician as health officer is wrong. It is scientifically, hygienically, commercially and from the point of simple common sense, wrong. Ordinary business principles applied to municipal government, show it to

be wrong. All thinking people who have given the slightest consideration to public health matters, know it to be wrong. The Federal Government knows it to be wrong and has summoned health officers to gatherings in order to teach the contrary. Yet Sacramento knows better!

The communications referred to here follow:

Sacramento, Cal.,
August 11, 1915.

Dr. Phillip Mills Jones,
Editor State Journal of Medicine,
Mr. Editor:—

Referring to your Editorial of "Progress or Retrogression" in the last issue of the State Journal of Medicine; permit me to state that you have evidently been *used*, given the wrong tips by *sore heads*. I gain the conclusion because your editorial don't state anything like the facts surrounding the causes for the dismissal of Doctor Williamson.

Because a rotten administration installs an expensive and supernumerary official on the Public is the more reason that that official should be ousted instantly by a new administration. This was done by Commissioner Simmons, as you relate, and I fail to see why you should worry yourself about the matter.

Fortunately, for Sacramento, we have a local man amply fortified with brains, experience and industry who assumes the duties himself, saving the taxpayers this extra cost, and that man is Dr. G. C. Simmons, the Commissioner himself; a life resident and taxpayer of Sacramento, Cal.

Unfortunately, such articles as you have written appear too frequently and show plainly the lack of balance in the scientific mind. Why not combine a mite of common business sense with science? I venture to say scientific men would stand higher in the public credit if they did. The cost of things and the ability to pay, it appears to me, are serious enough things to be taken into consideration.

At all events, your remarks about "political jobs" and "push" does not apply in the discussion as applied in "Progression or Retrogression" because Sacramento is well supplied with medical men fitted to preside over its Health Department and if that city is so fortunate as to have a public official patriotic and efficient to assume the important duty free, why! I don't think it is your time to "butt" in."

Yours truly

F. L. Atkinson, M. D.
Member Sac Soc for Med Improvemt.

P. M. Jones, M. D.,
Editor, Cal. State Journal of Medicine.

Under the editorial head of "Progress or Retrogression" in the August issue of "The Journal," you have made some grossly erroneous statements. When you speak of "Glaring instances concerning the dismissal of Dr. Williamson as Health Officer of Sacramento," of

almost criminal disregard for good public health effort and almost complete reversal of form—downward" your statement approaches the libelous; especially when you further speak of "petty politics—a place—a job—some votes"—again, "If we, as physicians, did not know that the people pay the bill of petty, practical politics with their lives, it would be to laugh; as it is, it is enough to make a thoughtful citizen almost angry enough to *commit a few murders* of "practical politicians."

Dr. Williamson's place has been taken by a physician of thirty years standing in this community, a graduate of Harvard, a world traveller, who having been elected to the office of Commissioner of Public Health and Safety by an overwhelming majority, has actually and absolutely given up a large and lucrative practice, to serve the people *gratis* in *his self-appointed* task as Health Officer of Sacramento; thus saving this City \$275.00 a month. You, nor any one else can justly criticize the present efficiency of the local Health department (backed by a Health Board of reputable physicians) nor compare it unfavorably with the previous administration in any particular, under Dr. Williamson.

It may seem difficult for you to grasp the fact that a member of the profession should, during these hard times, actually serve his fellow-citizens at considerable financial loss to himself and *absolutely without pay* in his capacity as Health Officer, but such is the case, and when these commendable efforts to save and serve, meet with scurrilous and unjust criticisms, and wholly unfounded statements such as appeared in your recent issue, it is high time that you receive the correct relation of the present status of affairs and the request that you make this as public as you did your original article.

Andrew M. Henderson,
J. W. James,
G. A. White,
Wm. Ellery Briggs,
F. F. Gundrum,
S. E. Simmons.

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